

MRS. ASQUITH TRIES TO SAVE THE JACARANDAS

I tried to save those glorious jacarandas --  
African trees that made a purple cathedral  
out of Bush St. when they bloomed each May --  
went to the City Council, got up a petition  
to stop mad progress from rooting out that beauty.

Wasn't it enough to destroy the orchards,  
couldn't they leave a single leaf in place,  
widen some other street or not widen any?  
Why do they think improvement means to erase  
everything that's old and not spend a penny

to preserve and conserve what loveliness we have?  
I lost, of course, crouched there behind my window  
hearing those buzzsaws until I thought I'd scream --  
it was my body they seemed to be ripping into.  
Some spirit dies with the murdering of trees.

DONALD DIMVUE, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

You think I'd want to go back?  
Not in a million years,  
not Greece, not the Renaissance --  
diseases, intrigues, wars --  
every era stinks.

Even the Michelangelos  
don't outweigh the Borgias,  
the ears of later Hitlers  
listened in Plato's grove --  
Elizabeth and Pericles

were only beasts in clothes --  
whatever has been done  
was done in spite of nations --  
technology's improved  
with all its revelations

mostly the ways of killing --  
it started with the wheel --  
and how much death went into  
one goddamned cathedral --  
it isn't any worse

it's only more and more --  
man is trapped in himself,  
he may go to the stars  
but takes in his bag of seeds  
his murderous desires.

-- Harold Witt

Orinda CA

#### MY AUNT BEA

I thought of her last night,  
as I watched Maureen Stapleton  
steal the show in Interiors  
(the first funny movie  
Woody Allen's ever made).  
Bea was married to my Uncle Orville,  
who had been married before.  
They were on my father's side of the family,  
the Asbury First Methodist side,  
so divorce was theoretically permissible,  
although in fact people simply didn't do it.  
Worse yet, Bea was a Catholic,  
or strictly speaking, an ex-Catholic,  
since by her marriage to a divorced man,  
she had excommunicated herself.

In those days in Upstate New York,  
relations between Catholics and Protestants  
were just a little more strained  
than in Mid-16th Century England.  
I can't remember my maternal aunts and uncles  
ever being in the same room at the same time  
with my paternal aunts and uncles.  
Probably my memory's just bad,  
but you can be sure the word "ecumenical"  
was on the tip of damn few tongues,  
and I can remember being forbidden by the parish priest  
to serve as escort to a flower girl  
at a protestant neighbor's wedding.  
There were some mighty pissed-off people over that one.

But Bea bit her thumb at excommunication.  
She still went to Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve  
and to any other Mass or service,  
Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish,  
she damn well pleased,